

Life in the Beech Forest

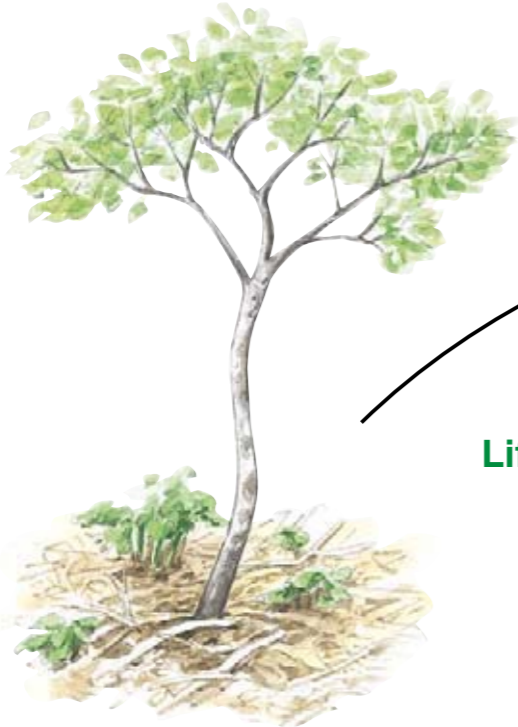
Shirakami-Sanchi lies in an area of heavy snowfall and comprises a pure Japanese beech forest that can survive under such snowy conditions. The gray-white beech tree trunks upstanding on a bamboo grass floor is a unique forest landscape to East Asia. The beech forest is known for its function of conserving water as well as being the habitat for many of wildlife species.

Un sanctuaire de vie à l'abri des forêts de hêtres

Situé dans une région de neiges abondantes, Shirakami-Sanchi est l'ultime site abritant les derniers grands peuplements de forêt primaire de hêtres de Siebold, une espèce capable de résister à la neige. Son paysage de troncs blanchâtres dominant avec grâce le sol recouvert de Sasa (herbe bambou) est absolument unique en Asie du Nord-Est. Sanctuaires de vie sauvage, ces forêts de hêtres jouent également un rôle important dans la conservation de l'eau.



Black woodpecker



Young tree
When the diameter of trunk exceeds 30 cm, most trees will bear acorns. Generally, a beech tree grows to bloom in 40 to 50 years and bear acorns in 60 to 80 years.



Japanese macaque

Life History of Beech



Blooming
In spring, both male and female flowers bloom with young leaves. The beech tree looks bloomed all over with yellow flowers because of yellow anther of the male flower.



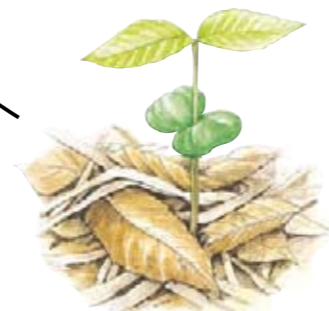
Golden eagle



Acorns
It is believed that most beech trees produce acorns in good and poor year normally in alternate order, and in great abundance every five to seven years. As acorns protected with solid shells are ripened and fallen, they become foods of small mammals such as large Japanese field mouse, Asiatic black bear and birds.



Asiatic black bear



Seedling
A beech seedling grows only 1 cm or less every year and its growing rate varies depending on the amount of light. Only a few trees become mature.



Geminating
Acorns that were fallen to the ground and luckily survived from animals will germinate in winter or early spring. Beech can germinate under the snow because the ideal temperature for germination is 0 to 10 degrees Celsius. It is believed that beech has adapted well to the cold and snowy environment.



Harlequin duck



Japanese serow

The Water Conservation Function of Beech Forests

The large round crowns of the beech forest trap a large amount of rainfall as it slowly descends to the forest floor. The water then slowly penetrates the soil through the forest floor vegetation and thick layer of fallen leaves. Beech forest contains many pockets of space created by the complicated beech root system and holes dug by soil animals, helping water penetration into the ground. This is why the beech forest can supply a large amount of water slowly to its watershed.